

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF KEYS (QUESTIONS)

**Douglas, Tuesday, 6th May 2003
at 10.05 a.m.**

Present:

The Speaker (the Hon. J A Brown) (Castletown); Mr D M Anderson (Glenfaba); Hon. A R Bell and Mr L I Singer (Ramsey); Mr R E Quine OBE (Ayre); Mr J D Q Cannan (Michael); Mrs H Hannan (Peel); Hon. S C Rodan (Garff); Mr P Karran, Hon. R K Corkill and Mr A J Earnshaw (Onchan); Mr G M Quayle (Middle); Mr J R Houghton and Mr R W Henderson (Douglas North); Hon. D C Cretney and Mr A C Duggan (Douglas South); Hon. R P Braidwood and Mrs B J Cannell (Douglas East); Hon. A F Downie and Hon. J P Shimmin (Douglas West); Capt. A C Douglas (Malew and Santon); Hon. J Rimington, Mr Q B Gill and Hon. P M Crowe (Rushen); with Mr M Cornwell-Kelly, Secretary of the House.

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**Police – Priority Payments to Officers –
Question by Mr Houghton**

Question 1. The hon. member for North Douglas (Mr Houghton) to ask the Minister for Home Affairs:

- (1) *Have you authorised the Chief Constable to make special priority payments to police officers in line with UK forces with effect from 1st April 2003; if so,*
- (2) *how will they be determined?*

The Speaker: Hon. members, for the first question on our order paper I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name, sir.

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Douglas East, Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Braidwood.

Mr Braidwood: Thank you, Mr Speaker. With effect from 1st April 2003 the remuneration of police officers has allowed for a new range of payments, including the special priority payments. Such payments can be made to the federated ranks and range from a minimum of £500 per annum to £3,000 per annum and, in exceptional circumstances, £5,000 per annum. There are restrictions on the total amount of money available to the Chief Constable in terms of the percentage of the salary budget that he is able to allocate to these kinds of payments.

There are various qualifying criteria for these payments. These include elements such as significantly higher responsibilities than the norm for the rank; posts that present special difficulties in relation to recruitment or retention; and further considerations such as the impact of the post on policing priorities and in circumstances where officers undertake additional duties such as voluntary community projects.

Presently the Chief Constable and the senior management team of the Isle of Man Constabulary are in negotiations with the Isle of Man Police Federation concerning the implementation of special priority payments locally. No decisions have yet been made with regard to this matter and the discussions with the federation are not yet concluded.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the hon. minister for his reply this morning. Can he undertake to give this hon. House a full statement on these special priority payments once matters have been resolved within his department? Could he also advise how much has been budgeted across the board

for this and whether the Chief Constable has discretion to make these payments and whether they are, in fact, with the approval of the Department of Home Affairs, sir?

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

Mr Braidwood: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In answer to the second part, 1 per cent of the police salary budget during the first year will be allocated, which amounts to just over £72,000.

In answer to the first part, I can send a written explanation out, after the priority payments have been made, to hon. members of this House, and again it is up to the Chief Constable to make the priority payments, Mr Speaker.

**Social Security Division – Women Staff
Working Alone Out of Hours –
Question by Mr Gill**

Question 2. The hon. member for Rushen (Mr Gill) to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

- (1) *What is the Department of Health and Social Security Social Services Division policy regarding women staff working alone on out-of-hours duties; and*
- (2) *is this consistent with Department of Health and Social Security policy for other divisions?*

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Ta mee shirrey kied yn eysht y chur ta fo my ennym.

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Peel, member for Health and Social Security, Mrs Hannan, to reply.

Mrs Hannan: Vainstyr Loayreyder, the department's Social Services Division operates an out-of-hours social work service for mental health and adults and a separate service for childcare. These services are operated by male and female social workers from the division on an on-call basis.

Where there are felt to be risks involved to the social worker in visiting a client on their own and out of normal hours, the police are asked to attend. Additionally the mental health and adult team have access to a call monitoring service which enables the social worker who is working out of hours to let the service know where they are. If they have not reported back to the monitoring service by an agreed time then emergency services are contacted. This service is

likely to be extended to child out-of-hours social workers. All social workers also carry a mobile telephone.

There are a number of staff employed by the department, some of which are women, who work out of hours. Each have their own operation procedures based on the different circumstances of their rôle. Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder.

**Dentists – Recruitment Incentives –
Advertising of Vacancies –
Questions by Mr Henderson**

Question 3. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

- (1) *Are there any problems in recruiting dentists to the Island;*
- (2) *can you indicate if the package on offer is appropriate, and,*
- (3) *if not, why not; and*
- (4) *if incentives and remuneration are an element of this, will you be applying to Treasury for additional funding to arrest the Isle of Man dental crisis?*

Question 4. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

- (1) *What is the current situation for dentist recruitment to the Island in regard to current vacancies/posts required;*
- (2) *how long has your department been advertising any such posts; and*
- (3) *if there are any problems in recruitment, what are they?*

The Speaker: Hon. members, we now move on, and the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson, has agreed to ask questions 3 and 4 together, so I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Ta mee shirrey kied ny feyshtyn y chur ta fo my ennym.

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for health, hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I should perhaps make it clear that NHS dental services are provided through a combination of general dental practitioners who are self-employed contractors, by salaried dentists who are directly employed by the department and by school dentists who are also in the employ of the department. Whilst there are difficulties in attracting general dental practitioners into the National Health Service, my reply will concentrate on directly employed staff. In this respect I can confirm there has been a limited response to recent adverts for both salaried and school services.

The employment package is a combination of salary and removal expenses. The salaries are in line with similar posts being advertised in the United Kingdom and the remainder of the employment package is in accordance with that offered by similar positions within the DHSS.

Turning to the final part of question 3, the present three-year business plan for the DHSS contains additional funding for NHS dental services and any additional costs of recruiting and employing sessional dentists will be contained within this.

Turning to question 4, I can confirm that there is currently one vacancy in the present salaried dental service and one vacancy in the school dental service. In general dental practice I understand that one practice in the south of the Island is currently seeking to recruit an additional dentist.

In responding to part (2) of the question, I can advise the hon. member that the first recruitment for salaried dentists took place in the spring of 2002, when the department successfully recruited three practitioners to the new service. As the service has expanded with the development of a clinic in Ramsey, advertising has continued in order to recruit more dentists.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the main problem with the recruitment is the scarcity of available practitioners and the consequent limited response to recent advertisements, although initially there was a good response for the clinic in Douglas.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Would the hon. member agree with me that his department is not doing enough to arrest the current dental crisis, and would he further agree that the recruitment net needs to be cast wider than the UK if there are problems with recruiting dental practitioners from the UK? And would he further agree, on the back of that, that the package offered by the department is the one that is causing the current failure and crisis and so his department is very unlikely to have any willing practitioners coming to the Island when what they should be doing is redefining the workload and how dental practitioners manage their caseload?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would not agree with the hon. member. The recruitment net is being spread wider than the UK and in fact we have some dentists working on the Island from Sweden and recently we have had an applicant from Brunei. The package we are putting for recruiting dentists is a competitive one but unfortunately dentists are about as short as hens' teeth at the moment.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. I am glad the hon. member thinks this is amusing, but would he agree the real situation needs addressing further than what is being currently achieved? Again, I would put it to the hon. member, does he agree with me that the actual workload and caseload of practitioners needs to be looked at and further consultations with current practitioners would be very fruitful?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, the situation that we find ourselves in is one of a shortage of dentists throughout the United Kingdom and throughout Europe as a whole, and as a result of that we are trying to recruit wherever we can, but I think I must make it clear, in relation to the supplementary that the hon. member for North Douglas asked about changing the contract with existing general dental practitioners, that despite the fact that they have pulled out of negotiations we are continuing to find a way forward, and that is the department's stance at the moment.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Bearing in mind that the Isle of Man Dental Association have a natural conduit through the Dental Services Committee of his department, can the hon. member explain as to whether the Dental Association, especially in this crisis in dentistry, have a direct access for consultation with the department and the minister, sir?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, as the Dental Association knows, our door is always open for them to come and talk to us and, in relation to the existing contact we have with general dental practitioners, we are looking at trying to find a way forward even though it has come to a stalemate position in

negotiations. I can inform hon. members that the department has recently recruited an off-Island person to try and put into a place a system on a trial period with a limited number of dentists to find a solution to this problem. It is a problem that is the same, as I said earlier, in the whole of the United Kingdom, and they are struggling with the same situation as we are. Therefore we have not got a blueprint to follow and we are looking to put in place something on the Island that will help to retain general dental practitioners within the NHS service.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Ramsey, Mr Bell.

Mr Bell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Could I ask the hon. member whether his department has been successful in recruiting the two new dentists which are required for the proposed new dental practice in Ramsey and, if so, when that new service will be available to the general public?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am pleased to be able to say that the Ramsey sessional dental practice will open from today. We have recruited one dentist for that practice and we are trying to recruit a second dentist to complement that practice.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Ayre, Mr Quine.

Mr Quine: In the context of these negotiations, has the minister met with the dentists' representatives and, if she has, on how many occasions has she met with them as part of this drawn-out process?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I do not have the details of meetings between the minister and the Dental Association but I can say to the hon. member, as I said earlier, that our door is open and we were not the ones to pull out of negotiations. We are trying to find a way forward and will continue to do so.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Will the hon. member agree with me that, far from measuring ourselves against the UK, what we should be doing in this situation is working out an Isle of Man blueprint to suit Isle of Man needs and local community needs (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) and working that up in negotiations with the Dental Association, and that if negotiations are stalled it is

incumbent on his department to re-establish those negotiations and build in Isle of Man factors into that?

Mr Houghton: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will reiterate what I said: we are trying to put in place a system that is suitable for the Isle of Man. We are not sitting back and waiting to see what is happening in the UK, because the situation is even worse in the UK and, as I say, we are trying to put a pilot scheme into operation that will seek to retain the general dental practitioners within the NHS framework.

**Dental Lists – Treatment of Pensioners
Removed from –
New Patients in Douglas Area –
Question by Mr Henderson**

Question 5. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

What does your department intend to do with regard to pensioners who have been taken off NHS dental lists, through no fault of their own, who require treatment?

Question 6. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

- (1) What is the current situation with regard to dental practitioners taking on new patients in the Douglas area; and*
- (2) can you confirm or otherwise, that no current dentist is taking on any NHS patients?*

The Speaker: The hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson, has agreed that questions 5 and 6 can be taken together as they are of the same subject. I therefore call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Ta mee shirrey kied ny feyshtyn y chur ta fo my ennym.

The Speaker: I call on the member for Health and Social Security, hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. For all patients, including pensioners, who have been taken off NHS dental lists, the policy of the department is to make NHS dental services available through the provision of salaried dentists in clinic premises in Douglas and, as I have said earlier, starting in Ramsey today. These services have been established to provide NHS dental care for those residents who are unable to obtain it by other means.

In answer to question 6, I can advise the hon. member that at present there is one NHS dental practice in the Douglas area which is registering new patients. However, the situation does remain fluid and the department has been retaining a list of residents seeking to register with an NHS dentist who are given advice on a regular basis.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Is the hon. member aware that the capital town of this Island is not taking on any further patients to dental lists and that pensioners are actually being turned away? And would he agree with me that this is an utter shambles, and what does he propose to do, or what does he propose to instruct his department to do, to try and rectify this situation?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, as I said in my answer, there is still currently one practice taking on clients. However, the situation is very fluid but we are seeking to build on the services that we have put in place, and in our three-year business plan there are more plans for putting further sessional dentists in place. We are seeking to recruit at the moment to build on the numbers of sessional dentists we have, but we can only take one step at a time.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Ramsey, Mr Bell.

Mr Bell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the hon. member for his earlier reply, although I have to say it is disappointing to hear that we have only been successful in attracting one dentist as opposed to the two which have been promised and that the new surgery has been built for, but it is also good news that the new service is starting from today. Could I ask the hon. member, then, what publicity is being given to this new service as it is starting today, and could he ensure that the public who wish to have National Health Service provision for dentistry in Ramsey are informed as to how they can access this new service and when it will be directly available for them?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker. We have recruited one dentist for the Ramsey practice that we have put in place and we are seeking and we have interviews coming up shortly, hopefully, to recruit the second.

As far as letting people in the Ramsey area know about what we have put in place, many of them will have already been in contact with the family practitioners' service at Crookall House and will have registered their interest in being put on a list in Ramsey. However, I will make sure that there is adequate information put in the press so that residents of Ramsey and the surrounding area know the procedure in how to get onto those lists and who to contact.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Is the hon. member aware that pensioners are being turned away in the capital of this country - it has certainly been made known to me - and is he aware that his department, on speaking with members of this hon. House, is actually informing hon. members that people cannot be currently taken onto dental lists and that his department is currently constructing a list of people waiting to see dentists in the hope, when a dentist is recruited to the Isle of Man, that they can go there? So is he aware of that and would he agree to make a public statement to reassure the people of this Island that anybody in need of urgent care or otherwise can actually go and see some sort of dentist on a sessional basis?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Yes, Mr Speaker, as I have said already, we are keeping a list of people that cannot be accommodated at the moment on the sessional dental list and we are seeking to recruit to put another dental practice in place in Douglas in the near future.

As far as emergency services are concerned, we are making sure that there is adequate provision. Outside the salaried dental service we are providing an emergency dental treatment centre for patients who are not registered but do have an urgent dental need. This is both contained within the normal working day and also provided by an ad hoc session outside the normal working day. Currently an emergency dental service provision is available at Noble's Hospital dental clinic two nights a week between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. by appointment and emergency situations can be dealt with on Saturdays and Sundays also at the Noble's dental clinic between 9 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. As far as the community dental service in Ramsey is concerned, at the cottage hospital there is a provision there at the moment to see patients on a Wednesday between 1.30 and 4.30 p.m. plus ad hoc sessions when required.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas South, Mr Duggan.

Mr Duggan: Mr Speaker, the member has covered my point.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Would the hon. member agree with me that a policy is in place that allows an accumulation of Island residents waiting for dental treatment and, with no possible thought of getting any in the near future, it is actually a policy in absolute tatters? And would he further agree that the senior management team that allowed this situation to occur need to review their own positions, and that includes the minister?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, I would not agree with the hon. member. We are continuing to try and source dentists to fill these positions and we are not sitting back. There is a shortage of general dental practitioners, as I have said, throughout the United Kingdom and more widely throughout Europe, and this is the source of the problem. It is not a question of just throwing more money at it; these people are not being trained in sufficient numbers. It might be being addressed at the moment but it will take a while to come through the pipeline before there are adequate dentists. As we know, dentists are reducing their list sizes so more of them will be required in the future and we will continue to strive to put an NHS service in place for the people of the Island who cannot, for one reason or another, get into a private dental situation.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the member for health assure this hon. House and give out the details that if anybody needs emergency treatment they can get on to Crookall House as far as the information is concerned? Would he give the information about what would happen if people have got an emergency problem of dental pain, as this House has been given the impression outside that you have to grin and bear it, which is not the case, and would he give the information about where individuals should be going?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thought I had actually covered that point in an earlier supplementary. However, I will reiterate what I said,

that there is an emergency dental service that gives provision at Noble's Hospital dental clinic two nights a week between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. by appointment and on Saturdays and Sundays between 9 and 11.30 p.m., and there is a community dental service in Ramsey Cottage Hospital on Wednesdays between 1.30 and 4.30 p.m. plus ad hoc sessions when required. If people are not too sure of those hours they should, as the hon. member for Onchan says, get in contact with Crookall House, who will make sure that they know what the hours are and where those services are.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Michael, Mr Cannan.

Mr Cannan: Will the member for health agree or, if he cannot, advise the public and members of this hon. House if it is costing his department more financial resources endeavouring to recruit salaried dentists and all the palaver we are going through at the moment than if he had enhanced the terms of the contract of the existing dentists in the dental service and, above all, entered sensible negotiations with them rather than this stand-off, which is the cause of all this trouble, this stand-off between the department and the dental council of the Isle of Man?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, without knowing what would have been an acceptable amount to general dental practitioners for certain operations that they carry out, I can in no way give a comparison of what the extra costs would be, but I can say that we will continue to recruit people to our sessional dentists because we believe that it is important that an NHS dental service is available for people on the Isle of Man.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the hon. member for the department in advising hon. members of this House this morning on the availability of where one can go for an emergency or for any form of dental treatment, but would he not agree with me that the department needs to be regularly advertising these facts (**Mr Karran:** Hear, hear.) to help to keep the public that we serve and represent fully advised and informed on where they can get dental treatment and what to do in the event of an emergency dental situation?

A Member: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will make sure that the public are made aware through our advertising where these are available and where to go to when they have problems.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Could the member advise if media relations actually form part of their ongoing considerations in all these matters? It does seem that that is an area that seems to be lacking and is causing great concern not only in Ramsey, as we have seen at the weekend, but across the Island.

Mr Houghton: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We do have a department within the department that deals with media and I shall be raising the points of concern the hon. member has made.

DHSS – Treatment of ME Sufferers – Question by Mr Houghton

Question 7. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

- (1) *Can you confirm that ME is accepted as a specific illness by your department and that it was confirmed as such in Tynwald on 20th March 2002; and*
- (2) *what is the procedure for patients with ME to be appropriately treated when their GP or consultant refuses or fails to acknowledge their illness?*

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name, sir.

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Glenfaba, member for Health and Social Security, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I can confirm that my department has noted the recommendations contained in a report to the Chief Medical Officer of an independent working group on ME which has called on NHS and healthcare professionals to recognise ME as a chronic illness and, as stated in previous answers on this subject, the report's findings have been communicated to all

general practitioners, seeking their co-operation in referring all cases where ME is a possible diagnosis for specialist investigation. The purpose of the investigation is initially to exclude other conditions which may mimic symptoms of ME, following which referral to a consultant or specialist with expertise in this condition will be appropriate.

With regard to the second part of the question, the department has no evidence that would indicate that the protocol I have described is not being followed. However, in such circumstances patients would be entitled to ask to see another GP or seek a second consultant opinion as appropriate.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In order to expand the consultation and awareness of this now recognised illness, would the department possibly arrange a conference, say at the Postgraduate Medical Centre, for all appropriate healthcare officials with a special emphasis on general practitioners? Therefore, they would be fully briefed on ME and any treatment plans that currently exist in order to assist sufferers with this illness, sir.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am not sure if this is the appropriate way forward. As the hon. member will know, the report itself was a massive document and it was thought at the time unhelpful to circulate the whole document to very busy GPs. However, the appropriate part of that document has been made available to GPs and more information on it is freely available on the internet. If any GPs have any questions relating to any specifics in that report, then Crookall House will be more than happy to provide the in-depth report to them, but I can tell the hon. member that we are constantly in contact with the ME self-help group and have been able to make some progress, I think, in finding a way forward where situations arise where GPs have difficulty with this condition.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Following on from the last part of the hon. member's answer, may I therefore re-emphasise that it would be a good idea to have such a conference in order to bring those healthcare officials more up to date rather than issuing just an executive summary and having access to the main part of the information, and that a conference or a course would indeed be the proper way forward and would he investigate that further, sir?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, I will take this point up with Doctor Emerson who (**Mr Houghton:** Thank you.) is dealing with the ME self-help group and has been giving advice to the department, and I will respond accordingly.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, could the member for health tell this hon. Court: is there a centre for excellence in the United Kingdom? Has there been any investigation into the possibility of whether there should be a person brought in from the United Kingdom with specialist knowledge in the subject of ME? Are they investigating that on a monthly or bi-monthly basis or whatever in order to give people who suffer from ME the same ability to see somebody who knows what they are doing as far as the disease is concerned?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We are fortunate in having, in public health at Crookall House, Doctor Emerson, who has been involved in a pilot study in the Midlands before coming to the Island, specifically with ME, and it is on his experience that we are able to give helpful advice to GPs on the Island. Although I am not aware of any specific speciality in the UK that specialises solely on ME, I believe we are availing ourselves of the expertise that is available to us.

DHSS – Residential/Nursing Homes – Residents' Personal Needs – Question by Mr Henderson

Question 8. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

What is your department's policy in respect of a resident in either a residential or nursing home in respect of ensuring that they have all their personal items required to meet their personal needs?

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Ta mee shirrey kied yn eysht y chur ta fo my ennym.

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, member for Health and Social Security, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, the department's policy is to ensure that residents have a minimum amount of money to meet their personal needs, and I would refer the hon. member to the written answer to the question he has put forward at question 4. A person resident in a residential care or a nursing home may claim income support towards the costs of his fees and personal expenses in so far as his income falls short of applicable amounts. The political amount for personal expenses is £23.15 per week.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Is the hon. member aware that, although it sounds very nice on paper, the reality of the situation is that his department has pensioners trying to survive in nursing homes and residential homes on as little as £10 a week or even less?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, I do not have details of individual cases, but what I can say is that some 50 per cent of people in department homes are funded by social security benefits while in residential care. Their needs in terms of provisions of basic services such as food, clothes, cleaning, et cetera are all provided by the department as a part of the package of care, and the only things that people have to provide for themselves are toiletry items such as a toothbrush et cetera and perhaps cigarettes and items which are of relatively small value. If replacement clothes et cetera are required, an application can be made to Social Security Division for help via the income support system.

There have been times when people have difficulty in coping with the personal allowances paid via social security but this tends to be when people have a drink problem or possibly smoke excessively. For those who are self-funders it is assumed they will have sufficient resources to be able to purchase items to meet their personal needs.

Relatives often purchase small personal items on behalf of the resident. Where relatives are not available, staff will purchase on behalf of the resident items that they require. They may even take them out to shop to purchase the items themselves if they are able to do this. Some homes in private sectors do include personal allowance as part of the charges for residential care. Clearly in those situations there would be difficulties with the individual being able to afford personal items. I am not, however, aware of any complaints being brought forward about this.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the member for health not agree that he cannot ensure anything as far as this question is concerned? How long have there been no adequate inspections at nursing homes? Surely that must be the priority as far as this vulnerable section of the community is concerned.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think we are broadening this question out quite a long way. As the hon. member will be aware, there have been problems in nursing home inspections, but the department is seeking a way forward in putting something in place that would be acceptable.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Gura mie eu, Vainstyr Loayreyder. I put it to the hon. member again: would he agree with me that having pensioners in residential and nursing homes who are only eligible for £10 or less a week through their personal allowances, through whatever applications they have made, is an absolute disgrace in this current economic climate, and would he agree further that a review of that particular personal allowance is urgently required? And, Vainstyr Loayreyder, would he agree with me that blaming patients and residents for their own demise, as it were, is an utter disgrace?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, I am not aware of the problems the hon. member is bringing forward. The department has not been party to any negotiations. The fee charge is by a care home and the contract is between the home and the resident. Where a resident has insufficient income to pay the fee, he may claim income support, and income support allowances towards the fee costs are set at a maximum of £476.42 for a nursing home and £275.93 for a private residential home. Attendance allowance and disability living allowance are disregarded as income for income support calculation purposes.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the member not agree that, before his department could even consider looking at the personal items required for people in the homes, we have not got adequate

staffing to maintain the basic principles of standards within these nursing homes? And would he also not agree that if we are ever to be worried about the likes of these issues, we need to have somebody that is going in on a lower level such as lay people who would go in to befriend these people in order to make sure that these issues are sorted out, leaving the lack that there is at the present time of no policing of nursing homes, because at the moment we have got an appalling situation with this very vulnerable section of the community?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, to reply.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I said in an earlier answer, we are now able to recruit somebody to carry on these nursing home inspections, and I am aware of the hon. member's concern that there should be a lay body visiting as well. However, that has not been progressed at present, but the main thing is we are meeting our legal obligations inspecting these nursing homes and residential homes to make sure that they have the number of personnel for the number of residents they have, and I think that is the most important thing to make sure is in place.

**Car Parking – Chester Street –
Increase in Charges –
Question by Mr Anderson**

Question 9. The hon. member for Glenfaba (Mr Anderson) to ask the member for Local Government and the Environment:

What justification has the department for raising the all day car parking charge for Chester Street car park from £3 to £4, a 33 per cent increase in one year?

The Speaker: I reverse the rôle now. The hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson - your opportunity to ask the question, sir.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, I beg to ask the question standing in my name.

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Local Government and the Environment, Mr Earnshaw, to reply.

Mr Earnshaw: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would have thought by now the hon. member for Glenfaba might have been ready for a cup of tea and a sit down! Essentially there are two reasons for the department's decision to increase the all day charge for car parking at the Chester Street car park from £3 to £4. Firstly, the fee for over five hours has not been increased since April 1996 and, by comparison, all day fees at the

Douglas Corporation's Cambrian Place and the 'bottleneck' car parks are £6.40. At the corporation's temporary car park on the former Lord Street bus station site all day fees are now £3.90, so by increasing the fee at the Chester Street car park from £3 to £4 the department's charges have been brought more into line with those currently plied at other car parks in Douglas. The second reason is that, as the Chester Street car park is now some 25 years old, the department has embarked on a refurbishment programme. Work has already been undertaken on the top decks whilst the lower decks have been redecorated. Further refurbishment works are planned for the current financial year.

By the nature of their use, multistorey car parks require considerable ongoing repair and maintenance. As the Chester Street car park grows older, the department expects to have to devote more resources to the upkeep of this important facility in the centre of the town's retail sector. Extra income generated by the increase in charges for parking will assist in enabling this to be done.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for his comprehensive answer. I put this question to the House because I did have a long period where I did not receive one in writing, and now I find I have received an answer in writing the day before today's sitting. However, (**Mr Cannan:** Amazing!) can I ask the hon. member: is he aware that not only have the charges been increased but the actual capacity for all-day parking has been reduced and does he not think that this is inappropriate until the car park at Shaw's Brow has been finished?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Earnshaw, to reply.

Mr Earnshaw: Yes, I am aware of that, Mr Speaker. I think we face the old problem here of trying to get a quart out of a pint pot. The conflict that we have is that of meeting the needs of Safeway, who have their supermarket located under the Chester Street car park; we have the conflict of meeting the needs of general short-term parkers in the town; we have the conflict of museum visitors, and also those who want to use the car park for long-stay and all-day parking. So that is the position we have to face. It is these competing uses.

I am aware that, according to the briefing I have been given, in the original leasing arrangement Safeway are entitled to have up to 500 car parking spaces in that car park, which equates to about six floors, and negotiations have been taking place with Safeway and a compromise was reached whereby at the moment they are using four floors for short-term

parking rather than six. So whilst this helps the situation it does not resolve it.

Perhaps I can just expand a little bit at the moment on what is happening, Mr Speaker. Because we are aware of the difficulties there have been approaches to Safeway by the Government Officers Association, I understand, because it is felt that the four floors which have been used for short-term parking are being underutilised at the moment, and it is hoped by the department that a review will take place later in the year to perhaps try and address the problems of long-stay parkers for the future.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Middle, Mr Quayle.

Mr Quayle: Thank you, Mr Speaker. This is a situation that I have already discussed with the hon. Minister for Local Government and the Environment. Sadly she is no longer with us but has gone to another place. (*Laughter and interjections*) Could I ask the hon. member for the Department of Local Government and the Environment, would he agree with the integrated transport report where the working party wished to stress that suitable alternative forms of transport such as light railways and other methods should be in place and running satisfactorily before steps are taken to penalise the all-day car-parker by effective enforcement and increased car parking costs, and that it is unfair to penalise the members of the public if there is not a successful, fully integrated transport system already in place? And further, could I just ask: does he realise that the imposition of additional charges actually impacts on those people who are at the lower end of the pay scale, as most of the senior officers within the service receive a free car park?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Earnshaw, to reply.

Mr Earnshaw: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I do not think that forms part of the question on the order paper.

Members: Oh!

The Speaker: I would say that the questions relate to car parking in Douglas. However, the member is entitled to respond as he feels fit. Hon. member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Mr Speaker. If I could ask the question in three parts, first of all, is this huge increase part of DoLGE's policy to use prohibitive charging for car parking as a blunt instrument to deter car usage in Douglas? Secondly, is it a form of congestion charge without the messy necessity to come to Keys or Tynwald with legislation? And thirdly and I will reiterate the point that the previous speaker has

asked and was not answered but, I think, is worthy of a response - does he accept that the effect of these huge increases will be most felt by those least able to meet them?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Onchan, Mr Earnshaw, to reply.

Mr Earnshaw: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think I answered in my original reply that this is basically a levelling up of charges between the departments and those charges which are charged by Douglas Corporation. It may seem a huge increase, but this is the first increase since April 1996. There may be difficulties which parkers have to face, but the department is faced with the difficulty - and I did cover this also - in that it needs these funds for maintenance and perhaps, eventually, substantial repair and upkeep for the car park which we operate.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is the hon. member aware that, due to the inadequacies of the public transport system, many of my constituents are unable to get into Douglas on the public transport system to start work at the appropriate time? Therefore, would the department consider negotiating with other departments in putting in place a out-of-town car parking area that maybe would lead to some form of shuttle bus service, particularly in the early morning and in the evening time, to alleviate this problem for people living outside town that cannot get into Douglas using the public transport system? And would he not agree that this would also help to alleviate some of the congestion that we have at present in Douglas?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Earnshaw, to reply.

Mr Earnshaw: Yes, I am happy to do that, Mr Speaker. The department, as far as I am aware, is in consultation with the departments of tourism and transport to resurrect the park-and-ride scheme which was unsuccessfully trialed some time ago. Hopefully this time, if it comes to fruition, it will be launched in a slightly different fashion, and I think there are two locations which the departments are considering using at the moment, so it remains to be seen what eventually we arrive at but it is certainly a live issue at the moment.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the member not agree that it is not 25 years since we put the top decks on the Chester Street car park? Is this not

just another back-door way of taxation? Why can't the others level down instead of levelling up? What influence has the private sector had on these increases? Is this another way of encouraging more private sector initiatives as regards car parking within Douglas? And could the member inform this hon. House how much of the public purse is being spent on car parking spaces at the present time for senior members of government and the likes of the DHSS that have a large amount of car parking there?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Earnshaw, to reply.

Mr Earnshaw: Well, I can perhaps answer some of those questions, Mr Speaker, but my brief does not cover everything that the hon. member for Onchan has asked. As far as the private sector is concerned, to the best of my knowledge something has already been done on the former Mylchreest Motors site. There is a huge car park being built there which, I understand, is operated in private hands. I can only reiterate what I said before about the charges. I do not feel it has been excessive in the circumstances, bearing in mind that it is seven years since the last increase; April 1996 was the last one so we have had a 25 per cent increase in charges since then, and the department is in the process of considering some improvements and essential repairs which will have to be funded one way or another.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the hon. member for the department not agree with me that in hindsight his department ought to have at least increased the charges each year by the rate of inflation in order to minimise the impact and the shock on the public, who are presently now having to face up to a 33 per cent increase in one year? What are the department's plans in terms of keeping tabs on that situation with perhaps a small increase every year or two years so that they can keep abreast of it? And further, would he agree with me that the refurbishment to which he refers that the increase in charges are helping to finance is merely a paint job and, bearing in mind it is in my constituency, I am in and out there fairly regularly? Also, is he aware – and he has referred to it in one of his supplementary answers – that the Department of Transport is very actively in negotiation with officers in his department and with local authorities and identifying other than two sites to which he referred for the provision of park and ride to help alleviate the impact of such traffic into Douglas? Further, have his departmental officers discussed with other departmental officers the issues of car share, bearing in mind that Chester Street is dominated particularly by those who work for government and they come in and they park all day? Has his

department instigated, or would it instigate, discussions with other departments in order to come up with initiatives to better serve their employees and save the impact on this resource?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Earnshaw, to reply.

Mr Earnshaw: There are a lot of questions in there again, Mr Speaker. First of all, can I say this is not just a paint job. There have been considerable improvements made to the lighting and I understand further improvements are to take place. I understand a refurbishment of the public toilets area on the ground floor is being considered, and also I understand the machinery that is used to collect ticket money is in the process of being upgraded and/or replaced, so there are quite a lot of projects on the go at the moment which will require to be financed.

One of the other questions she asked was about the local government department being in consultation with other departments regarding parking on that site. I understand that is taking place. The department is well aware of the difficulties being faced by long-term parkers from other departments, but we go back to what I said originally: we are trying to, with this site, get a quart out of a pint pot. There has been some alleviation of the difficulties of parking in central Douglas following the relocation by Royal Skandia, the insurance company, who moved out of their premises in Finch Road two or three months ago and have relocated in Onchan, and we are hoping that the new Shaw's Brow car park, which is due to open at the end of this year, will further assist the situation that we face at the moment.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Middle, Mr Quayle.

Mr Quayle: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can I say how unfortunate it was that I did not actually receive an answer –

The Speaker: Can I say, hon. member, I have covered that. Could you please ask a question and not continue to make statements?

Mr Quayle: Could I ask if the hon. member can, as a matter of priority, make himself aware of correspondence that goes back to 2001 from the Isle of Man Government Officers Association where it clearly has said, in relation to the question about Chester Street car park, that it is unfair to penalise members of the public if there is a successful, fully integrated transport system in place?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Earnshaw.

Mr Earnshaw: Yes, I think I am aware of that correspondence, but perhaps the member would make it available to me in case it is other correspondence than I have got in mind?

The Speaker: A final supplementary on this question. I turn to the hon. member for Douglas South, Mr Duggan.

Mr Duggan: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can I ask the member in charge: is there any incentive offered by the department if people want to park there, say for a week? Could they have a weekly ticket at a reduced cost or a monthly ticket?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Earnshaw, to reply.

Mr Earnshaw: Well, it seems like a good idea but I am not aware of that, Mr Speaker.

**Post Office –
Quantity of Machine-Sorted Mail –
Question by Mr Houghton**

Question 10. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the Chairman of the Post Office:

How many items of mail are being destroyed each day by the automatic sorting machine situated in the Douglas sorting office?

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name, sir.

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Ayre, the Chairman of the Post Office, Mr Quine.

Mr Quine: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Isle of Man Post handles some 200,000 pieces of mail daily, a very small number of which can be damaged in transit or sorting. The damage, of course, can occur whether it is subject to mechanised or manual sorting either on the Island or in transit to the Island. Of the above total, in the order of some 100,000 items are dealt with by mechanised sorting. Damage is more likely to occur when items are poorly packaged or contain small, inflexible objects such as pens, coins and badges which conflict with the moving parts of the machinery. The operating system incorporates features to detect and reject items which are outside the operating parameters, but this mainly relates to size and thickness. Staff are trained to remove incompatible items but some do, of course, escape detection.

When a damaged item of mail is detected, repair is effected and the item forwarded and usually under covering wrapper with a card tendering our apologies. Any damaged caused to an item of mail, whether the damage was caused on or off the Island, is to be very much regretted, but the almost inevitability of some items being damaged, I think, has to be recognised. I will be pleased to afford hon. members an opportunity to visit the Douglas sorting office and view the automated sorting of mail first-hand.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the hon. Chairman of the Post Office for his reply. I have to say, though, it cannot be acceptable to people who send items of value through the mail which are then destroyed by such a machine. Can he advise as to how many items were actually damaged before the time of this machine, when they were physically sorted by hand, sir?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Ayre, Mr Quine, to reply.

Mr Quine: Well, I certainly cannot give a figure today for the number of items that were damaged prior to this system coming in because, of course, the question relates to the new system, but I can confirm that items of mail were certainly damaged under the old system, which was partly mechanised and partly manual.

In terms of items of value being damaged, of course there are special arrangements by which items of value can be sent through the post which are quite separate and quite distinct from the ordinary mail which is handled through the post.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the hon. member confirm, though, how many items on average a day are actually being destroyed? Would he agree with me they can range from anywhere between 6 and 60 depending on the level of pressure on that machine, sir?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Ayre, Mr Quine, to reply.

Mr Quine: Well, there is certainly no pressure on the machine. I think, if members do take the invitation I have extended to go and see the machine, you will see that far from having pressure on the machine there is a great amount of spare capacity at this time.

In terms of the number of items that are damaged during the day, the 60 figure certainly does not ring a bell. We do not keep figures on a day-to-day basis, but

I have obtained figures from two runs in the last 10 days and, bearing in mind this is in relation to in the order of 100,000 items going through the machine, the number of damaged items was in the order of six.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Middle, Mr Quayle.

Mr Quayle: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We have had the benefit of a very helpful reply to the written question and in that, if I can refer to the cost of engineering support at £53,700 per annum, could I ask the hon. member for Ayre if he agrees that that seems a realistic and satisfactory figure? To me it seems very, very high. Is there any prospect of that reducing after the initial period of the machine actually being assembled and after the first year, or is the £53,700 per annum fixed for a number of years or will it reduce?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Ayre to reply, Mr Quine.

Mr Quine: I do not think that that is an exceptionally high figure because it is, of course, a figure that covers the maintaining and the response capability to all incidents involving this equipment. I do not have the contract with me for this particular project, but I would imagine that it would be fixed for a number of years, although it may well be related to an inflation factor.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the hon. chairman advise us as to whether this machine was indeed recommended by the United Kingdom Post Office, sir?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Ayre, Mr Quine, to reply.

Mr Quine: Yes, the situation is that the purchase of this equipment was independently reviewed, and it was reviewed on behalf of the head of technology of the British Post Office consultancy service. That was done in January 2001, prior to the proposal being accepted by the then board. The review confirmed the appropriateness of the equipment to meet the needs of Isle of Man Post and Siemens have, of course, supplied this equipment to a considerable number of other post offices; it is not new technology.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes questions for oral answer. Item 2 on our order paper is questions for written answer. There were five questions which have been circulated to hon. members in compliance with our standing orders.

Commercial Vehicles – Prosecutions for Breaking Speed Limit – Question by Mr Earnshaw for Written Answer

Question 1. The hon. member for Onchan (Mr Earnshaw) to ask the Minister for Home Affairs:

At present, the Island has an overall speed limit of 40 mph for drivers of commercial vehicles. How many commercial vehicle drivers have been prosecuted in the last two years for exceeding this limit in areas unlimited by speed restrictions for non-commercial vehicles?

Answer

Regrettably the Isle of Man Constabulary does not have a mechanism in place which identifies the specific type of vehicle involved in speeding offences. The retrieval of such information would be onerous as individual files would need to be retrieved and checked for this type of data. The overall speed limit for drivers of heavy goods vehicles and buses is 40 mph. All commercial vehicles such as vans have an overall speed limit of 50 mph.

However, in the last two years from April 2001 to March 2003 the Isle of Man Constabulary have successfully prosecuted 670 cases for speeding offences, which resulted in fines. This figure is broken down to 147 cases in the year 2001-2 and 513 cases in the year 2002-3. It should be noted that in 2001 special events such as the TT Festival and the Manx Grand Prix did not take place due to the foot-and-mouth disease restrictions in place, which likely suppressed numbers of prosecutions at that time.

In addition, during the same period, April 2001 to March 2003, 51 cautions have been issued. There are currently 9 cases pending.

At the end of the policing year 31st March 2003 the time spent by officers of the Isle of Man Constabulary in connection with the use of speed detection equipment had risen by 34 per cent from the previous year.

DHSS – Residential/Nursing Homes – Care Charges – Question by Mr Henderson for Written Answer

Question 2. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

What is the maximum or set rate your department has negotiated with the private sector to pay for a person requiring residential or nursing home care?

Answer

The department has not been party to any such negotiations, the fee charged by a care home being a matter of contract between the home and the resident. Where a resident has insufficient income to pay the fee he may claim income support, and income support allowances towards the fee cost are set at maxima of £476.42 for a nursing home and £275.93 for a private residential home. Attendance allowance and disability living allowance are disregarded as income for income support calculation purposes.

**DHSS – Non-Entitlement to Benefits –
Income Levels –
Question by Mr Henderson
for Written Answer**

Question 3. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

What is the minimum level of income determined by your department whereby a person is not entitled to -

- (1) *Income Support;*
- (2) *Family Income Supplement;*
- (3) *Disability Living Allowance; and*
- (4) *Attendance Allowance?*

Answer

- (1) Rates of income support are determined by reference to rates of personal allowances, premiums and housing costs depending upon the circumstances of the individual less such income and capital resources as are not disregarded. Further details of the relevant rates (and thus the minimum incomes above which entitlement is lost) were provided in part II and appendix 2 of the Memorandum on the March 2003 Social Security Legislation issued to the hon. member prior to that sitting of the Court.
- (2) Rates of family income supplement are determined at 70 per cent of the difference between prescribed amounts which again depend upon the circumstances of the individual, and such income and capital

resources as are not disregarded. Again, further details were provided in part II and appendix 3 of the memorandum referred to above.

- (3) and (4) Disability living allowance and attendance allowance are not income-related.
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**DHSS – Residential/Nursing Homes –
Personal Allowances –
Question by Mr Henderson
for Written Answer**

Question 4. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

What is the maximum personal allowance that can be claimed by a person moving into a nursing or residential home with little or no private income, assets or funds which the department is funding?

Answer

A person resident in a residential care or nursing home may claim income support towards the cost of his fees and personal expenses insofar as his income falls short of applicable amounts. The applicable amount for personal expenses is £23.15 per week.

**Post Office – Automatic Sorting Machine –
Question by Mr Houghton
for Written Answer**

Question 5. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the Chairman of the Post Office:

With regard to the automatic sorting machine situated at Douglas sorting office -

- (1) *what was the total cost of the equipment;*
 - (2) *when was it installed;*
 - (3) *what are the maintenance arrangements and annual costs;*
 - (4) *what was its estimated productivity at time of purchase;*
 - (5) *what is its actual productivity in percentage terms;*
 - (6) *was this particular machine recommended by the UK Post Office as a tried and tested piece of kit; and, if not*
 - (7) *why was it purchased?*
-

Answer

- (1) The total cost of the equipment was £3,093,410 exc. VAT.
 - (2) The installation of the equipment commenced in October 2001 and was completed on 26th September 2002.
 - (3) Isle of Man Post employs two trained engineers to carry out engineering support on the equipment. Further engineering support is available through a help desk at Siemens Dematic, who also has the facility to remotely dial in to the equipment's diagnostic systems. The cost of engineering support is £53,700 p.a. and the cost of consumables used between installation and 31st March 2003 is £1,929 (exc. VAT).
 - (4) The contract specified the machine performance in a range of areas. The key measure of success of the automated systems is the read rate of the Optical Character Reader (OCR). The contract specified an average OCR read rate of 62.6 per cent.
 - (5) In the three months January to March 2003 the actual read rate of mail presented to the OCR was 74.2 per cent.
 - (6) The proposal to purchase this equipment was independently reviewed by the Head of Technology at the British Post Office Consultancy Service in January 2001 prior to the proposal being considered by the Post Office Board. The review confirmed the appropriateness of the equipment to meet the needs of Isle of Man Post. Siemens Dematic have supplied similar equipment to Royal Mail, Guernsey Post Office and many other postal administrations world-wide.
 - (7) Recourse was made to the automated sorting of mail primarily to achieve economy and efficiency of operation and to enhance the working conditions of Isle of Man Post's employees.
-